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JANUARY 7, 1981

Dear Mr. Whitehurst:

Thank you for your letter of December 11 on behalf of the Norfolk Area Concerned Citizens for Democracy in Korea concerning the course of events in the Republic of Korea and the fate of opposition leader Kim Dae Jung and other defendants.

The U.S. Government has followed the trial with much interest. We share your constituents' concern and have repeatedly made our views known to the Korean leadership and to President Chun personally. We will continue to do so. Mr. Kim's case is presently undergoing judicial review, and we are anxiously awaiting the outcome.

Regarding the larger issue of human rights in Korea, we have consistently encouraged Korean authorities to move toward a more representative political system. It is our hope that the promulgation of the new Korean constitution, approved by over ninety percent of the population on October 27, will be a first step in that direction.

In a recent development, the Korean Government released eight imprisoned dissidents on December 11. One of those set free was Korean poet Kim Chi Ha, who was serving a 20-year sentence on charges of anti-government activities. Dr. Yun Po-ho, a co-defendant of Kim Dae Jung in his September trial, was also released. We are pleased by the decision to free these men and the spirit of reconciliation surrounding this action. Mr. Kim is reported to be in good health and has been reunited with his family.

With the exception of [illegible] training programs and financial credits [illegible] to purchase essential military equipment from sources in this country, the U.S. Government no longer provides economic and military aid to Korea. However, our security commitment to Korea remains

The Honorable
J. William Whitehurst,
House of Representatives.

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a fundamental element of our foreign policy in East Asia. Our military presence, tangible evidence of that commitment, serves important U.S. strategic interests in the region.

Sincerely,

J. Brian Atwood
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.